

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL

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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

**VA ANNOUNCES SITE SELECTION COMMITTEE FOR ORLANDO MEDICAL CENTER** (VA News Release July 28, 2005) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced July 28 the immediate creation of a site selection committee to determine the best location for a new VA medical center in metropolitan Orlando. The site selection team will consist of VA staff from Orlando, VA's regional health care network and the Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C. It is anticipated that the process for identifying appropriate sites will take approximately three months.

VA announced plans in May 2004 to build a new facility in Orlando. The medical center, with over 1 million square feet, will have 134 inpatient beds, expanded outpatient services, a nursing home and a domiciliary. The \$350 million center is expected to open in five years. RLF/Ellerbe Becket, a joint venture architectural and engineering team from Winter Park, Fla., has been selected to design the new medical center in Orlando.

**RECENTLY AUTHORIZED MEDALS** Five new medals have recently been established by the Department of Defense.

**Combat Action Badge:** Service members may be eligible for the Combat Action Badge if they: performed assigned duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized; were personally present and actively engaged or were engaged by the enemy; and performed satisfactorily in accordance with the prescribed rules of engagement. The Combat Action Badge is similar to the Combat Infantryman Badge except that it is awarded to service members who have a military occupational specialty other than infantry or special forces. The Department of Defense expects to begin awarding the Combat Action Badge this summer.

**Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal:** Service members who participated in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom anytime between October 24, 2001 and April 30, 2005 are eligible to receive the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal if they participated in either operation for 30 consecutive days or 60

nonconsecutive days, or meet one of the following criteria: engaged in actual combat against the enemy under circumstances involving grave danger of death or serious bodily harm, regardless of time in the area of eligibility; were killed, wounded, or injured requiring medical evacuation from the area of eligibility, regardless of time in the area; or participated as a regularly assigned air crew member flying sorties over the area of eligibility, with each day that one or more sorties are flown counting as one day toward the 30 or 60-day requirement. The Department of Defense stopped awarding this medal effective May 1, 2005.

**Global War on Terrorism Service Medal:** Service members may be eligible for the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal if they participated in or served in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, or Iraqi Freedom for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days, or meet one of the following criteria: engaged in actual combat, regardless of time in the operation; or were killed, wounded, or injured requiring medical evacuation from the operation.

**Afghanistan Campaign Medal:** Service members may be eligible for the Afghanistan Campaign Medal if they served in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom on or after October 24, 2001 to a future date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense or the cessation of the operation. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the country of Afghanistan and all air space above the land area. The Department of Defense began issuing this medal on May 1, 2005.

**Iraq Campaign Medal:** Service members may be eligible for the Iraq Campaign Medal if they served in direct support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on or after March 19, 2003, to a future date to be determined by the Secretary of Defense or the cessation of the operation. The area of eligibility encompasses all land area of the country of Iraq, the contiguous water area out to 12 nautical miles, and all air space above the land area and contiguous water area. Service must have been assigned, attached or mobilized to units operating in these areas of eligibility for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days, or meet one of the following criteria: engaged in combat during an armed

engagement, regardless of time in the area of eligibility; wounded or injured while participating in an operation or on official duties and required medical evacuation from the area of eligibility; or while participating as a regularly assigned air crewmember flew sorties into, out of, within or over the area of eligibility in direct support of the military operations; each day of operations counts as one day of eligibility. The effective date for issuance of this medal is May 1, 2005.

**A NEW VA SURVIVORS' BENEFITS WEBSITE** was recently posted on the Internet. It can be found at [www.vba.va.gov/survivors](http://www.vba.va.gov/survivors). The Website is intended primarily for survivors of service members who die while on active duty. A convenient feature at the site is that users have the option of selecting, up front, information on "Death In Service" or "Death After Service" to suit their needs.

**ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE** Clothing allowance may be paid to a veteran who has a service connected disability or a disability that requires he or she wear or use a prosthetic or orthopedic device that wears out or tears clothing. The clothing allowance may also be paid if the veteran uses, for a service-connected skin condition, medication prescribed by a physician which causes irreparable damage to the veteran's outer garments. A skin condition requiring use of medication is not considered static, and a redetermination is required each year.

The application form for the clothing allowance is VA Form 10-8678 Application for Annual Clothing Allowance (Under 38 U.S.C. 362). This form may be downloaded from <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>, or obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000. Clothing allowance claims should be sent to the VA Medical Center or Outpatient Clinic of jurisdiction, for the attention of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service.

To be eligible for the 2005 clothing allowance, the veteran must be found to meet the eligibility requirements on August 1, 2005. At the end of July computer-generated applications are issued to veterans whose records are set to require annual redetermination of clothing allowance eligibility. The 2005 clothing allowance payments for veterans who have been authorized payments before the last processing cycle of August will be issued on September 1. Checks for clothing allowance awards input after the last processing cycle of August will be issued in about seven to ten days after the award is authorized. The 2005 clothing allowance is \$616.00. Veterans who are receiving their compensation payments by direct deposit will receive the clothing allowance payment by direct deposit. Veterans without direct deposit will receive their payments by check to the same address as their compensation checks.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES IN AUGUST**

**August 1** payments for July due

**August 8** last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2005 payments

**August 19** last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2005 payments

#### **VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 **1-800-827-1000**

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 **1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)**

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications **1-877-823-2378**

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - **1-877-222-8387**

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) **1-877-838-2778**

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 **1-800-669-8477**

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -

CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024  
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 **1-800-733-8387**

**Foreign Medical Program Office** (medical treatment abroad) -  
PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 **303-331-7590**

#### **National Cemeteries**

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL **727-398-9426**  
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 **352-793-7740**  
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL **850-453-4108/4846**

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC 20420 **1-800-697-6947**

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility)  
PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120  
**1-888-244-6711**

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit** -  
Chicago VA Regional Office **1-800-829-4833**

#### **INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:**

VA Web Site: **[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)**

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)  
**<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/>**

Property Management **[www.ocwen.com](http://www.ocwen.com)**

Florida Department of Veterans Affairs:  
**[www.floridavets.org/](http://www.floridavets.org/)**

St. Pete Regional Office: **[www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)**